

Community Facilities

QUALITY OF LIFE



Community facilities, whether public, private or nonprofit, contribute to the quality of life of a community. They serve as a good barometer of an area's economic condition and reflect the quality of life within a community. *The Plan* defines community facilities under six categories:

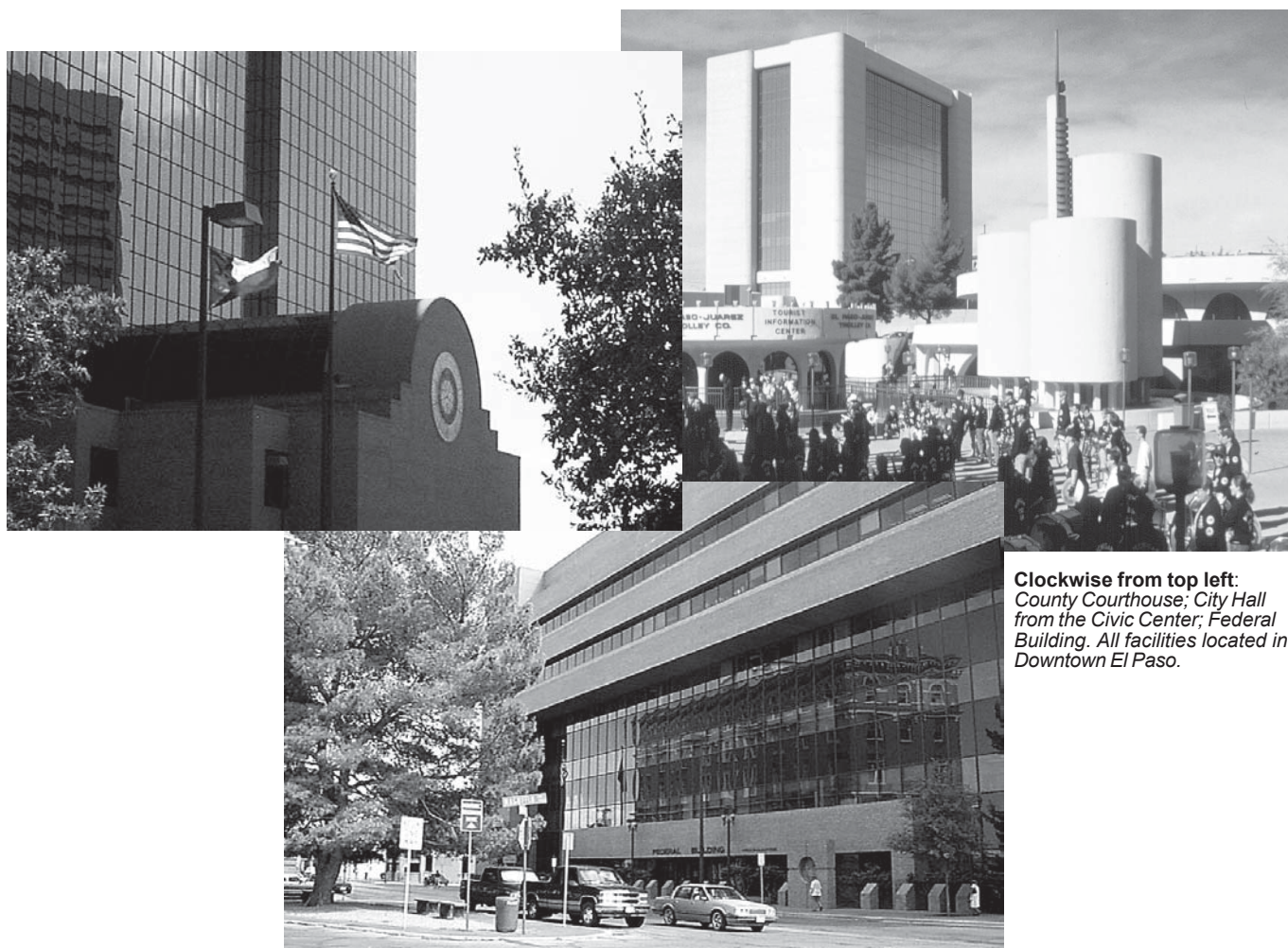
1. governmental and quasi-public;
2. education;
3. parks and recreation;
4. arts and culture;
5. public safety including police, fire, health and emergency services; and,
6. utilities.

Governmental facilities are those which include all levels of governmental offices, jails, courts, and military offices. Quasi-public facilities are those which are not publicly owned, but which benefit the public. They include facilities such as the YMCA/YWCA, churches, community centers, and fraternal, veterans and civic clubs.

El Paso has nine school districts, four of which are within the El Paso City Limits. School districts are separate governmental entities and are independent from the jurisdiction of the City or County. They are created by State law and answer directly to the public through their elected school boards.

Parks and recreation areas, community centers, day care centers, and senior centers are those facilities which satisfy the social and health needs of citizens. Public service facilities such as police, fire and health facilities are necessary for fulfilling a government's responsibility in protecting the health, safety and welfare of its citizens.

Utilities in El Paso are provided by a combination of public and private organizations. Water and sewer service is provided by the El Paso Water Utilities-Public Service Board (EPWU-PSB), a semi-autonomous branch of City government. Electricity, natural gas, cable television and telephone services are provided by independent private companies.



Clockwise from top left:
*County Courthouse; City Hall
from the Civic Center; Federal
Building. All facilities located in
Downtown El Paso.*

Governmental and Quasi-Public Facilities

Governmental and quasi-public facilities benefit the public by providing locations throughout the City that provide different services to the community.

GOAL: **PROVIDE FACILITIES TO MEET BOTH COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENTAL NEEDS.**

National standards of service should serve as guides for the City to better provide community facilities that maintain and improve the area's quality of life. These standards will help to ensure the provision of quality community facilities throughout El Paso while helping to create a better quality of life for our residents.

POLICY: **Encourage the concept of governmental centers within the various planning areas .**

Figure 8.1: Quasi-Public Facilities Design and Location Guidelines

- *Whenever possible, public and quasi-public facilities should be located in commercial or office zoning districts with access from collector, minor, or major arterials.*
- *Provide off-street parking to service the maximum designed capacity of a facility without compromising pedestrian safety or aesthetics.*
- *Whenever possible, facilities should be located on shared sites with other facilities. For example, a community park and fire station could share a central location for a group of neighborhoods.*
- *When located in or adjacent to a residential district, the facility design should be compatible with the residential character. As an aid to maintaining the character of the area, the following criteria are recommended:*
 1. *Access to the facility should not be permitted from local streets. Churches and schools are permitted uses in residential districts, however, access to them should be from a collector street.*
 2. *The facility should be screened from the neighborhood through the use of buffers including setbacks, open space, screening or landscaping to reduce spillage of traffic, noise, automobile headlights and exterior lighting.*
 3. *Residents adjacent to such facilities should be given the option of extending the height of the wall or fence between their property and the facility beyond the current six-foot height limit to ensure privacy and safety.*
 4. *Signs and structures should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood and adjacent uses.*
 5. *The facility design should accommodate pedestrian traffic, allowing easy walking access. Where possible, access to public transit should be emphasized.*



Left: *Northeast Municipal Building on Dyer Street.*

ACTION: **Establish guidelines for the location of governmental and quasi-public offices that will be of greatest benefit to the public (see Figure 8.1).**

As the City grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for governmental organizations to efficiently provide necessary services to the public from a central office location. Decentralization of governmental agencies and the creation of “satellite governmental centers” within each region of El Paso will allow for a more efficient distribution of services throughout the City.

ACTION: **Establish and implement an integrated, well coordinated Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the development of City facilities.**

A Capital Improvement Plan is the multiyear scheduling of public physical improvements based on fiscal resources available and the choice of specific improvements to be constructed for a period of five to six years in the future. An effective Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) can be beneficial by: helping to improve the chances for the implementation of the comprehensive plan; taking long range needs into account when considering the City’s annual budget; examining alternative funding sources; prioritizing projects, and improving financial management.

ACTION: **Locate governmental and quasi-public facilities in areas where the character of the land uses, architectural style, setbacks and other design features are compatible with existing or projected surrounding land uses.**

As governmental centers are identified and developed, care should be taken to ensure that facilities are built in such a way as to utilize landscape and setbacks to help preserve neighborhoods and to complement and enhance quality of life. For example, satellite governmental offices can be integrated into a mixed-use, town-center network and along traffic corridors.

Education and Planning

GOAL: ENCOURAGE INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND RESIDENTIAL ZONING TO BE LOCATED IN EACH OF THE VARIOUS SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO HAVE A MIX OF LAND USE VALUES CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

POLICY: Encourage use of an urban center approach to educational facility planning and construction to maximize educational facility design and location within the community.

The urban center approach to educational facility planning and construction encourages the maximization and joint-use of public facilities. Residential use of sports courts after school hours is just one idea for this concept. Schools located within an urban center can also help to further a sense of community and pride by fostering neighborhood ownership which, in turn, increases community input. Furthermore, such facility location promotes safety and convenience for children and parents by keeping kids within walking distance of their homes.

ACTION: Target and recruit new industries that foster increased economic opportunities for all residents with relevant training programs to provide a skilled workforce.

As discussed in the **Border Issues& Economic Development Chapter**, a skilled workforce is necessary in order to compete in the global marketplace. Providing alternatives for additional skill-based learning will help to create an attractive workforce which, in turn, will encourage further economic development in the area. On-the-job training and educational programs that train workers for specific positions in new industries locating within the region should thus be encouraged.

GOAL: ASSIST EDUCATIONAL PROVIDERS TO ADEQUATELY PLAN FOR CONTINUED GROWTH, NEW TECHNOLOGIES, MAINTENANCE AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS.

School district financing comes from two major sources: local property taxes and State education assistance grants. The State of Texas grants financial assistance to various school districts to equalize resources for school programs and to help equalize property tax burdens assessed by local school districts. A mix of land use promotes a stronger tax base and minimizes the tax burden on individual home owners.

POLICY: Encourage more joint-use agreements and facilities with school districts and other service providers to make better use of community resources.

Creating joint-use facilities maximizes the use of City funds while encouraging the development of bigger, multi-use facilities. These types of facilities are easier and less costly to maintain than smaller, individual ones which are not centrally located. An example of joint-use agreements are those between the City's Parks and Recreation Department and the public school districts. The Parks Department, in partnership with the El Paso, Ysleta and Socorro School Districts, share costs and maintenance for court facilities such as tennis and basketball, soccer fields and swimming pools at local high and junior high schools. Some schools which currently share facilities include Austin, Coronado, Irvin, Montwood, and the Socorro ISD Student Activities Complex.

Figure 8.2:

Public & Nonpublic Schools Serving Grades K-12 Design and Location Criteria

Each school district has its own standards and considerations for school site location and development. The following criteria were derived from information provided by the school districts in El Paso County. The criteria included here are designed to fulfill the health and welfare needs of the community.

School Site Size:

Elementary:	8-12 Acres
Junior High /Middle:	20-25 Acres
Senior High:	40-50 Acres

School Site Characteristics:

Site should not exceed excessive grading or fill and be free of excessive fill, rock or subsurface water conditions. Site should not be located in flood-prone area.

Site Location:

Site should be centrally located in the area it is planned to serve. Sites should have safe approaches for all modes of travel. Accessibility should be determined based on the following criteria:

- 1. Elementary schools should front local streets and have side or rear access to a collector arterial.*
- 2. Middle or Junior High schools should be located on collector streets or minor arterials whenever possible.*
- 3. Senior high schools should front on minor arterials with major arterial access at the back or side (see Transportation Chapter for a definition of streets).*

School Capacities:

Elementary:	600-1000 Students
Junior High / Middle:	800-1500 Students
Senior High:	1000-4000 Students

Additional Design Considerations:

- 1. Play areas should be fenced and access limited to points that can be easily supervised, while still providing joint use by area residents during non-school hours.*
- 2. An off street area should be designated for the pick up and drop off of students. This area should be large enough to allow for the normal flow of traffic along the adjacent streets during the period when the greatest number of students are being dropped off and picked up.*
- 3. Adequate on-site parking must be provided.*
- 4. Joint development with City parks should be encouraged.*
- 5. Traffic Safety plans must be developed and effectively used around schools. Deceleration lanes, traffic control devices, and bus pull-out lanes off the major arterial should be considered on a site by site basis.*
- 6. Where possible, all school sites should allow for dedicated pedestrian and bicycle connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.*

ACTION: **Coordinate the location and development of school sites with school districts and developers.**

With the City facing rapid growth in its outlying areas, coordination of the location and development of school sites is of the utmost importance. Such coordination would allow districts to maximize the use of urban center planning rather than building in areas where busing would be necessary. By reducing the need for busing, traffic impact is decreased, safety is increased and school district costs are kept to a minimum, all of which would help to keep taxation to a minimum.

ACTION: **Follow location and design criteria for public and nonpublic schools (see Figure 8.2).**

ACTION: **Increase coordination between developers and public entities to address impacts of large-scale developments on public services and facilities.**

Parks and Recreation

As of January 1998, the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department actively managed 130 parks, twelve recreation centers, nine senior centers, seven sun and wind shelters, six indoor/outdoor swimming pools and eight outdoor pools. In addition, two golf courses are also owned by the City: Cielo Vista Municipal Golf Course and Painted Dunes Desert Golf Course. The Chamizal National Memorial, Franklin Mountains State Park and Ascarate Park and Golf Course are operated by Federal, State or County agencies, but play an important role in the quality of park and recreation facilities in El Paso. In addition to these public facilities, there are a variety of private recreational facilities throughout the area including private country clubs, miniature golf courses, amusement parks and sport complexes.

GOAL: **PROVIDE QUALITY PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF, AND VISITORS TO, EL PASO.**

Parks add to a city's quality of life and are a gauge of a city's attractiveness. Providing these to the community to meet the recreational needs of the community thus enhances the area's quality of life.

POLICY: **Utilize the Comprehensive Parks and Open Space Plan, adopted in 1996 and as updated, to guide the development of park/recreation facilities.**



Left: *Memorial Park.*



Left: Socorro Independent School District's Student Activities Complex.

ACTION: Continue to utilize available grants and bonds to implement the Park Plan as created by the Park Dedication Ordinance.

POLICY: Expand park acreage and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the expanding population within the community through several methods

including, but not limited to: a park dedication ordinance, dual-use agreements, and park/ponding facilities.

The expense of acquiring and developing recreational areas may be reduced through the continued utilization of the City's Park Dedication Ordinance and dual-use agreements with the public school systems or other governmental bodies. An example of dual-use combines the same plot of land for both park and high, middle or elementary school purposes. In this way, both the City and the school district may share the use of the land and maximize its usage. Park/ponding facilities could also maximize open areas that might otherwise be under-utilized.

ACTION: Design ponding areas for dual use as parks including redesigning existing ponding areas for use as parks where feasible. Joint-use of dam and ponding sites for recreation should also be pursued.

ACTION: Develop a network of scenic easements and landscaped open spaces connecting community facilities to enhance and preserve El Paso's natural beauty.

In those areas of the City where this can be accomplished, bike and jogging paths connecting community facilities should be created. Fully integrated parkland and green spaces provide walking/jogging, biking and skating trails which could connect El Paso's parks, schools and urban centers. These would also serve to provide alternative methods of transportation as well as help to develop a stronger sense of community.

ACTION: Establish a program for timely development/redevelopment of public recreation facilities in El Paso through the implementation of a Capital Improvements Program.

ACTION: Design parks in such a way that adequate parking will be available for participants and spectators at functions taking place at the park but will not impact the adjacent neighborhoods.

POLICY: Encourage the private sponsorship of recreation programs.

POLICY: Encourage neighborhood involvement in the maintenance and development of parks.

Greater ownership in parks is achieved by having private entities or organizations, such as a neighborhood associations or civic clubs, sponsor events in public parks or use park facilities for organizational events. This also helps to develop a stronger sense of community ownership.

ACTION: Develop a park maintenance plan using improved technology to maintain current and future park-lands in an attractive, safe, and functional manner.

Well maintained parks are an asset to El Paso. Automated sprinkler systems, time released fertilizers, water thrifty plants, and the assistance of civic and community groups play important roles in keeping our parks in good condition.

POLICY: Foster a cooperative environment between the City, County and State parks departments for planning, development, programming and maintenance.

Though they provide somewhat different services, the City, County and State parks departments serve the same people. With scarce resources, competition should be eliminated and a more efficient use of shared information and equipment created. The City and County should consider the possibility of consolidation, with the City taking over the County parks department.

ACTION: Coordinate the development of the Franklin Mountains State Park and its access points with the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife to assure access to the park by all El Pasoans.

One of the most important recreation facilities in the El Paso area is the Franklin Mountains State Park. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department adopted a management plan for the Franklin Mountains State Park in May 1994 which provides for a variety of actions to guide park management to preserve its natural and cultural resources while simultaneously making it available for public use. The park is easily accessible from McKelligon Canyon east of the mountain and Tom Mays Park on the west side of the mountain, however, there are no other existing access points. The City could create trailheads which would complement existing development and provide emergency access.

ACTION: Strongly promote joint development of educational, non-profit and private facilities and City parks for recreational purposes.

Joint-use of public and quasi-public facilities will help maximize acquisition and development of parks and recreational areas while minimizing costs. The El Paso, Ysleta and Socorro Independent School Districts have endorsed and implemented the concept of joint-use school facilities for recreational and educational purposes through joint resolutions with the City and should continue to do so in the future.

POLICY: Provide a balance of parks, open space, and recreation facilities that include the renewed use and adaptive reuse of existing facilities.

For the Parks and Recreation Department to truly serve all of the City's recreational needs, renewed and adaptive uses/reuses must be developed for existing facilities. Parks are needed for both children and adults which makes diversity necessary. While parks provide for sporting needs (e.g., baseball fields, basketball courts, etc.), they also provide access to El Paso's natural environment, picnic areas, passive recreation, hiking, art festivals and the like.

Legend:

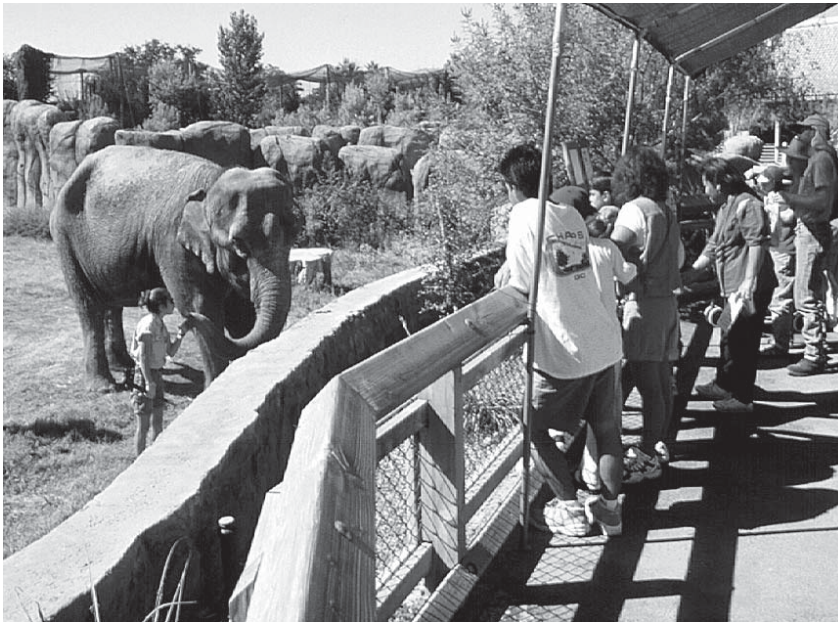
- 17 Modesto Gomez Park
- 18 Ascarate Park
- 19 Yarbrough Commuter POE
- 20 J.P. Shawver Park
- 21 Zaragoza POE
- 22 Ysleta Mission
- 23 Bustamante Wastewater Facility
- 24 Rio Bosque Wetland
- 25 Socorro Mission
- 26 San Elizario Mission

- 1 Gallegos Park
- 2 Upper Valley Levee Trails
- 3 Keystone Dam Wetlands
- 4 Mount Christo Rey
- 5 ASARCO and Old Smeltertown
- 6 Hart's Mill and Old Ft. Bliss Area
- 7 Union Depot and Union Plaza
- 8 Downtown Redevelopment Projects
- 9 World Trade Center
- 10 Paso del Norte and Friendship Bridges
- 11 Guillen Middle School
- 12 Bowie High School
- 13 Chamizal Park - Cd. Juarez
- 14 Chamizal National Memorial
- 15 Bridge of the Americas
- 16 El Paso Zoo and County Coliseum
- 17 Modesto Gomez Park
- 18 Ascarate Park
- 19 Yarbrough Commuter POE
- 20 J.P. Shawver Park
- 21 Zaragoza POE
- 22 Ysleta Mission
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ACTION: Establish parks and open spaces along the Rio Grande River in conjunction with the American Heritage River designation.

Zoological Park Facilities

The El Paso Zoo— the only one of its size in the area— is truly a regional facility. It serves to provide zoological needs for a region which encompasses three states and two countries.



Above: Elephant Savannah at the El Paso Zoo.

GOAL: Support, expand and enhance the El Paso Zoo.

Visitors to the zoo come from many smaller towns which surround El Paso, as well as from Mexico. Promotion of the Zoo in all areas will serve to add to the quality of life for El Paso's residents.

POLICY: Develop the Zoo as a regional center for education, recreation, tourism, scientific study and conservation of the world's wildlife and natural environment.

ACTION: Expand Zoo and recreation facilities and programming in the area through the addition and renovation of new and existing exhibits.

POLICY: Provide a zoological park for entertainment, education, and conservation, operated by professionals, in cooperation with the El Paso Zoological Society.

ACTION: Continue to develop and update Five-Year Plans for the Zoo.

Continued expansion of the El Paso Zoo will serve to increase the City's appeal for tourists; bolster the City's appeal to new business prospects; add to the City's green space; provide more family-oriented recreation for the community; increase informal learning opportunities and increase the Zoo's support for the community through programs and activities. For the Zoo to become a truly regional facility which serves the community's needs, further expansion must continue.

Arts, Culture and History

GOAL: PROMOTE QUALITY ARTS, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PROGRAMMING THROUGHOUT THE CITY WHICH ENCOURAGES THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL AGES, ETHNIC GROUPS, INCOME LEVELS, AND INTERESTS.

POLICY: Promote El Paso's historical, cultural and sports facilities for tourism.

El Paso's history and geographic location lends itself to the development of tourism in the area. Our historic Mission Valley, in which the oldest Missions in Texas and the United States are located, as well as other area attractions can be developed and promoted to attract visitors to the City. In supporting the development and redevelopment of El Paso's historic Mission Trail, museums, cultural and sporting facilities, the City stands to benefit greatly from tourist generated dollars.

Right and Below: First Traveler and mural of the Mission de Ysleta del Corpus Christi del Sur.



ACTION: Develop a strategic plan for arts and culture in El Paso with the support of all concerned organizations.

POLICY: Develop cultural districts to include theaters, museums, restaurants, galleries, plazas and other distinctive architectural and historic features.

The arts, cultural and historic image of El Paso could be strengthened by developing one or more of these types of districts. Traditionally, museums and theaters have been far more successful when concentrated in a central district. The district could be enhanced with outdoor performances and other special programs. The proposed Union Plaza District is one example of an arts and entertainment district and the Historic Mission Trail is an example of a historic district. While arts and culturally oriented businesses should be the focus of such districts, a mix of uses such as hotel, retail, office, and residential should be given incentives to locate there.

ACTION: Develop and improve the museum network throughout El Paso including the creation of museum districts.

Nineteen museums presently operate in El Paso County. Museums preserve our cultural heritage and provide educational and aesthetic opportunities for residents and visitors. The City opened a

new, larger El Paso Museum of Art in the Summer of 1998 which will contribute to the cultural focus in downtown El Paso.

- POLICY:** Encourage private sector agencies and organizations to use their facilities for cultural events in the City.
- POLICY:** Continue to assist with the development of various funding sources for arts, cultural and historical programs.
- ACTION:** Develop incentives for private financing of art as part of new construction or major remodeling of commercial, office or industrial buildings.
- POLICY:** Encourage development and financing of art in public places and buildings, including, but not limited to, sculpture, murals, painting, and media arts.

The City should pursue a public art program, fashioned after successful examples in other cities. The purpose of public art is to enhance public spaces, creating a more interesting and unique city environment. Public art includes works in all mediums that may be a part of the site, a functional element, or a portable or temporary installation. The City should consider a percent-for-art program to fund the initiative. Funding for this program could be derived from capital improvements in public buildings. A Public Art board and jury could be convened to develop guidelines and execute selection criteria, maximizing public participation, artistic quality, and functional characteristics. While initially located in the downtown area, public art projects should be eventually placed in other strategic locales throughout the City.

Public Safety

One of the most important responsibilities of city government is to ensure the safety of its residents. Four important types of community facilities that help fulfill this responsibility are: police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), and health facilities. The Community Facilities map contained in the **Map Atlas** shows the location of fire stations, police stations, and other related facilities.

- GOAL:** PROVIDE SERVICES, FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE RESIDENTS OF AND THE VISITORS TO, EL PASO.
- POLICY:** Encourage the development and implementation of programs designed to support increased safety throughout the City.

Techniques useful in discouraging crime are defensible space, lighting, and Neighborhood Watch programs. Defensible space is the design and management of a physical environment in such a way that crime is discouraged. Defensible space proposes to use design, architectural and landscape features to enhance security. Lighting in public places discourages crime at night. Finally, the establishment of Neighborhood Watch programs is encouraged throughout El Paso to ensure safe and secure neighborhoods.

ACTION: Provide quality police, fire and other emergency services protection to all parts of the City taking advantage of new technologies.

Ever changing technology demands that primary consideration be given to updating the City's services. Emergency services, over the last decade, have become highly specialized and technologically advanced. This requires knowledgeable, experienced and trained professionals to provide quality emergency services to residents. In taking advantage of new technologies, care can become more efficient and expeditious, minimizing response times and maximizing care, service and protection.

ACTION: Design public buildings to ensure safe and secure public spaces.



Left and Below: EMS, Police and Fire Department facilities.



POLICY: **Continue to coordinate the management of the El Paso City/County Emergency Plan to enhance the City’s ability to mitigate the effects of disaster.**

The El Paso City/County Emergency Plan remains in effect and should be updated and reviewed annually by knowledgeable professionals.

ACTION: **Promote multi-organizational regional cooperation among local, state, and federal organizations.**

POLICY: **Provide sufficient equipment and personnel to handle all types of non-medical or non-security emergencies such as hazardous materials incidents.**

ACTION: **Provide consolidated dispatch system services for police, fire and EMS.**

The dispatch function of police, fire and EMS is a vital and complex function for the provision of public safety in any community. In addition, there are significant legal requirements for each department. If consolidation is the most efficient way of handling the City’s dispatching requirements, then an independent department should be created to accomplish this function.

Utilities

Water, wastewater, and other utility services are the foundation of the services provided to the citizens of El Paso. To ensure the provision of quality services, existing facilities must be maintained and improved. Additionally, the expansion of these public resources is necessary for urban development and economic growth. Utilities in El Paso are provided by a combination of public and private organizations. Water and sewer service is provided by the El Paso Water Utilities—Public Service Board (EPWU-PSB), a semi-autonomous branch of city government. Electricity, natural gas, and cable television are provided by the El Paso Electric Company, Southern Union Gas, and Time Warner Communications (cable), respectively. Local telephone service is provided by Southwestern Bell and a variety long distance telephone service companies. Each of these is a private corporation.

GOAL: **PROVIDE EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO SERVE THE PRESENT POPULATION AND FUTURE GROWTH.**

POLICY: **Continue coordination between the planning and development of public service utilities, and land use planning.**

Coordination between public service and land use planning will help to ensure the following: (1) that adequate public utilities can be made available to areas being developed; (2) that minimum requirements for subdivision utilities can be and are met, and (3) the sustainability of growth patterns throughout the City.

POLICY: **Continue to explore technological advances in the delivery of utility services.**

POLICY: Expand public outreach programs to inform citizens, businesses and agencies in the City of rate changes, water plans and the implications of water losses and shortages.

POLICY: Create committees that meet for defined periods and types of projects to brainstorm and provide input into the development of various plans, programs and water rate policies.

POLICY: Encourage underground placement of power, telephone, and other utility distribution lines, where feasible, in new developments and in older neighborhoods.

ACTION: Maintain utility easements, substations, generating plants, and booster stations in such a way that they are pleasing amenities to the City.

The City should implement innovative methods in which easements, substations, generating plants, well-fields, water and wastewater treatment plants, booster stations and reservoirs can be maintained. By xeriscaping, planting native vegetation and using reclaimed water to maintain vegetation, these amenities could complement the neighborhoods in which they are located and serve as examples of innovative landscaping and conservation.